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How the working classes
are to be saved...

Northampton [Eng.]

1883

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HOW
THE WORKING CLASSES
ARE TO BE SAVED,
AND
PAUPERISM EXTINGUISHED.

BY
R. REID.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

NORTHAMPTON :
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1883.

HOW THE WORKING CLASSES
ARE TO BE SAVED,
AND PAUPERISM EXTINGUISHED.

INTRODUCTION.

Two million paupers and criminals in a population of thirty-six millions, besides four or five millions on the threshold of the workhouse are hideous results of the baneful shadow of that upas tree called modern society, under whose deadly influence the vast majority of the working classes are condemned to poverty and a premature grave. Yet, with these undeniable facts before us there are statesmen, dubbed "*Great*," who have had statues raised to their memories when dead, and others who have had like honors while living. Servile farce! It is forgotten that the verdict of posterity may, some day, remove these monuments to mend the streets and condemn all our Prime Ministers from Pitt to Gladstone

as mere coblers and tinkers, whose only talent was to patch up a rotten state of society, to tinker class interests, and who never—if ever they knew how—dared to strike at the root of human misery. Legislators have been called wise, because the mass of the people were ignorant of their rights; and rulers, too, who have only handed down and perpetuated all the bad laws of a savage state of human society, whilst boasting of civilisation. Let no man talk of civilisation, when we know there are thousands of men all over the country who are willing to work and yet cannot obtain employment, who are condemned to idleness with all its attendant miseries to them and their families—why? Because the employers at the time cannot see a profitable investment in the workman's labour, while at the same time there is abundance of food and raw material in the world which, if by just laws the unemployed could obtain, they would then be able to keep their families in comfort and add to the wealth of the nation. On the other hand, we have the small capitalist struggling to keep his credit afloat. As the crew of a vessel, foundering at sea, throw part of the cargo overboard in the hope of saving their ship, so the small employer parts with his goods for less than their value, trying to save himself from ruin. One hundred millions sterling are annually lost in bad debts, that is, to the creditors; for the greater portion of this sum finds its way into the pockets of lawyers and large capitalists. On land, as it is in the sea, the big fish swallow up the little ones.

At any moment a commercial crisis may send

hundreds of employers into the Bankruptcy Court and thousands of workmen to starvation or poor law relief. Such is this stupid, cruel *state* of society—I cannot call it a system, it is too absurd—that when a devastating fire destroyed in the City of London £3,000,000 of property and Manchester goods, this catastrophe, which, in a just system of society, would have been looked upon as a great calamity, was generally regarded as a benefit in giving employment to additional labour to replace stocks. The Paris Exhibition building of 1878, which cost £2,000,000, and might have served a hundred useful purposes was levelled to the ground, the employment of the working classes being the argument most strongly adduced for its destruction. Thus fires and vandalism have been recognised as auxiliaries of modern statesmen in the art of governing.

The present state of society had its origin in the darkest ages of human history. The social condition of the people to-day is but the steady development of the principles of the selfish savage. Then it was the power of the club; now it is the power of capital. Whilst every other subject of human knowledge has been controlled or directed by the mental organizing faculties of man, the social question on the contrary has been left in all its primæval barbarity, the strong crushing the weak. This horrid state of society, which political economists, from Adam Smith downwards, have treated as a science, is but a foul disease, having sacrificed more lives than all the Fetishes and Juggernauts in the world. Like Topsy, it never was born; it grew; and the non-producers have grown up, like a

huge parasite, around the body of humanity, extracting with their blood-suckers all the health, riches, and luxuries of life, leaving the great mass of the people in poverty and misery.

In the following paragraphs are given the only remedies for the evils from which the people suffer.

NATIONAL CREDIT.

National Credit shall be established for the United Kingdom and Ireland.

That in every borough and county the respective trades shall form themselves into separate societies; each society according to their numbers to be empowered to receive from the State sufficient capital for production.

That the sums placed to the credit of each society, shall be under the control of commissioners in every borough and county—the directors of each trade to be elected by its members, the directors being responsible to the commissioners and the commissioners to the State.

As there will be no credit given, therefore no commercial risks, the advances will be in the form of a trust, not as a loan.

Any misappropriation by commissioners, directors, or workmen, shall be punished as a felony.

The advances made to the trades shall be in State notes guaranteed by the Nation.

There shall be a national currency of paper, every note in circulation representing *bona fide* property in existence. Metallic currency being simply used to facilitate fractional exchange will be valued at what it will fetch from time to time in the various markets of the world.

The land and all mines therein to be national property—indemnity given to those who prove their right. Parliament to be called upon to at once annul all Enclosure Acts since 1710. Such a measure would restore 8,000,000 acres to the people.

The agricultural labourers, instead of vegetating in misery, would become tenants of the State, the necessary advances of capital being made to them for the successful cultivation of the soil. The rental of the land to defray all local and national expenditure; and, in proportion as the land falls under the direction of the State, the present system of taxation to be abolished.

The coal miners, no longer obliged to work for the benefit of a few individuals, could have extra shafts in the pits to ensure the safety of their lives, and everything that human foresight could adopt for the miners' security would be carried out to their utmost limits.

The advances made by the State to the country will simply cost the paper and printing; that to be reimbursed by the people. It is the "Promise to Pay," the moral and material guarantee of the entire nation, likewise the responsibility of the Ministry that will give confidence and security to the State Notes. Again, as these advances are in the form of a trust, the Government will have at the least 90 per cent. at their command, the remaining 10 per cent. which, of necessity, will be protected by the law of the land. Under the present state of trade a working shoemaker or tailor is often entrusted with from six to ten pounds' worth of material to make up for his employer, although the man may not be worth as many shillings. Yet the proverbial

honesty of working men, and any would-be evil-doer knowing that he would be punished, is sufficient security for the manufacturer.

The State would be in exactly the same position in relation to the people, as a father occupies in relation to his son in starting him in business. "Here are a thousand pounds for you to trade with; you shall have a steady demand and all transactions cash; I shall be trustee and treasurer until you return the capital I have advanced." With such conditions what risk would the father run? Absolutely none. The four or five hundred million sterling which is now annually extracted from the working classes, would, under the new organization of society, remain in the hands of the producers, which, in a given time, would enable them to clear off all their responsibility to the State.

PRODUCTION.

Production to be carried on exactly as at present, with every improvement which can secure the greatest amount of freedom for every workman.

The trades' societies to elect their respective managers, foremen and clerks.

Each society to appoint a committee of direction to recommend to the trades the best model of building yards, factories and workshops for construction, or to purchase at a fair valuation the existing yards, factories and workshops.

Professional schools, where all trades shall be taught under the most proficient masters, to be established in every borough and county.

The minimum price of labour shall be ten shillings per day.

The amount of work for a day's pay to be fixed by the respective trades' societies, subject to the approval of a National Congress of all trades.

The minimum of pay alone being fixed a good and quick workman could increase his income in proportion to his superior ability.

A high protective duty to be placed on all foreign manufactured goods, only to be removed when other nations adopt similar institutions to our own.

Complete freedom would be enjoyed by every work-

man to work individually or collectively according to the necessities of his trade. The right to labour being secured by law, the workman would be free to work in any part of the country, at the sea-side, if he preferred it, instead of being condemned to live between brick walls as thousands are in our large cities.

The abolition of the present patent laws, which are but a legalised system of robbing the working classes of their inventive genius, shall be achieved by substituting a decree that all inventions be properly secured by registration with the Town Clerk on payment of a nominal fee of one shilling. All inventions that are found to be useful to society to be purchased by the State, the inventor receiving an indemnity, more or less, according to their importance. The invention would then become public property.

As the system advocated here is entirely on the personal property principle—such as exists to-day—with the most sacred respect of private property, the foundation of all order and good Government. Any man daring to call this "communism" or "property in common" would be saying that which he must know to be false.

EXCHANGE OR DISTRIBUTION.

National Stores to be established in every locality according to their importance throughout the country. In connection with them it shall be provided—

That experts or judges be appointed to estimate the value of every article deposited in the Stores for Sale.

That the seller shall receive the value of his goods in notes which will then (and not till then) become the legal currency of the country, as they will have stamped upon them the fact that they represent property actually in existence.

That the exact price paid by the store shall be affixed to every article, so that the consumer buys them for the same price that they were produced. Immediately the purchase is made, the notes to be cancelled.

That to make the stores self-supporting, a commission of one half per cent. be charged from producer and consumer.

The enormous advantage to the working classes of bringing the producer and the consumer hand to hand can only be equalled by the fact that the country would not require the services of commercial travellers. It could be arranged that a sample of anything new, could be sent to every store in the country; then a telegram or post card would do the rest. This would eventuate in a saving to the producing community of not less than £60,000 per day.

As ships and houses could not be taken to the Stores, the valuers would go to them, so that the transfer of a house would be as easy as that of a wheel-barrow.

That a commission be elected by the people to import all foreign produce necessary for food and raw material for manufacture, to be delivered to the country at cost price, and so put an end to all those "Rings" and "Corners" by merchants and dealers which have been nothing but legalized plunder, to the prejudice of the people who were powerless to protect themselves. To illustrate how easily this commission could work I have only to mention that a select body of merchants, members of the Baltic Coffee House, pass through their hands all the Russian produce brought to this country. A similar commission to direct our exports should be appointed, and so dispense with all non-producing merchants. The enormous saving to the people by this arrangement, combined with an intelligent reform of our carrying system, would quite make up the just price paid for labour under this system.

For the Home Trade, all goods would be consumed in the locality where they were produced, according to the demand of the population, and it would only be the surplus production that would be sent to another locality where it was in demand. The waste of labour at present in the carrying trade is only worthy a nation of lunatics. We find goods, produced in the North, sent to the South, and the same goods, manufactured in the South, sent to the North, when the most of it might have been consumed where produced.

The supply and demand of our home trade would be

more than doubled. There is not a working man's family but what would consume twice more of our manufactured goods than they do at the present time.

In the foreign markets we could undersell every country in the world, from the fact that our people would become the richest nation on the globe, and we could afford to sell our goods at cost price or even less, by putting the difference on the products that we received in exchange. Every working man being in receipt of £3 per week or more, could well afford to pay the extra price on all articles so affected, so as to maintain our supremacy in the foreign market.

These reforms coupled with the circumstance that industry would no longer be burdened with the millions that are extracted from labour, in the shape of interest on commercial bills by banks and money-lenders, would give us the advantage over every country in the world, and ensure the universal happiness of the people.

THE EFFECT OF OUR PRINCIPLES ON THE FUTURE.

The organization of Society on such lines as are foreshadowed in the preceding pages, would enable the great mass of the people to obtain more moral and intellectual culture. The fear of want no longer existing, the finer feelings of humanity would become properly developed, so that parents would not permit their girls to promenade our streets in future, and the great social evil would be effectually stamped out.

Our boys, having education and work, would no longer be the victims of the recruiting sergeant's shilling, nor become hired assassins to murder the lives and liberties of other people at the bidding of an ambitious Prime Minister—Egypt to wit.

Money would no longer grow money, as cabbage plants grow cabbage. The reign of interest would be over; the rich would have to live on their capital or become producers. The £400,000,000 that they extract yearly from the toiling millions would remain in the pockets of the workers.

Our sailors would not have to risk their lives in rotten vessels. Harbours of refuge would be constructed to protect our shipping. Our miners, who risk their lives in the bowels of the earth, would have a fair remuneration for their labour, and, in their case, shorter hours.

Misery, the fertile mother of crime, having vanished, there would be few criminals and more respect for life and property.

Pauperism would be all but exterminated. The improved condition of the people would enable them to make provision for their families, and only the lame and the blind would require support from the State, which would be given to them as a right, not doled out as a charity.

Strikes between labour and capital would be abolished for ever. No capitalist could then starve his countrymen by employing foreign workmen, as was done in ¹⁸ building the London Law Courts.

For the early adoption of these social reforms the people must insist on all Parliamentary candidates supporting this radical programme, and the man who will not pledge himself to the extension of National Credit (which is already the law for Irish tenant farmers), National Production and National Exchange is unworthy the confidence of the working classes.

**END OF
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